United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

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OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK 190-3-16

SUBJECT: ECS – Nutrient Management Issues

Purpose: To distribute information regarding nutrient management issues on grass establishment.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2003

During the Zone 1 Quality Review held in January and the quarterly Ecological Sciences Staff Meeting held in March, several nutrient management issues were identified that needed clarification. Some of these issues were discussed with staff from Oklahoma State University (OSU) during March. The following information is provided to field office employees regarding these issues.

Issue: Soil testing required for all grass establishments, including CRP establishment. Per national requirements, the Range Planting Standard (550) is being updated and will require a soil test for establishment. It will refer to the Nutrient Management Standard (590) for recommendations. According to National and State nutrient management policy, recommendations are to be made in accordance with OSU (the Land Grant University) soil fertility guidance. OSU indicated during discussions with them that they would not recommend exempting any portion of the state from the need for a soil test. One reason, there are several areas of the state (even in the west) where pH problems are developing. Therefore, it is becoming more likely that soil amendments may be necessary to correct acidity problems prior to the establishment of grasses.

A procedure used in some field offices in past years was to plant grass without soil fertility tests. If a stand of grass resulted, the practice was certified complete. **This method is not within standards and policy, and will no longer be accepted without a soil test and application of required soil amendments.**

NRCS policy and technical guidance require soil testing to determine recommendations for all grass establishments. No change in this policy is warranted. Increasing water quality concerns also make soil testing important. **In summary, no vegetative practice or OK-CPA-4 shall be *certified (nor cost-shared)* without a soils test. The only exception is Critical Area Planting (342) using the 40N-$40P_2O_5$-$40K_2O$, "in lieu of rate".**

Issue: Clarification on use of form OK-CPA-4 for certifying vegetation plantings and the use of nutrient management. The OK-CPA-4 form is required for both planning and certifying vegetative establishments. Regardless of who fills out the form, the OK-CPA-4 must be signed by an individual designated as a "Certified Nutrient Management Specialist". (Oklahoma has over 150 persons certified in nutrient management.) A revised version of the OK-CPA-4 has been developed to permit better documentation of nutrient management for grass establishments. It will be provided to field offices very soon through a Field Office Technical Guide Notice.

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Issue: Use of the proper charts in the Nutrient Management Standard (590) for grass. Employees should be aware that the Nutrient Management Standard (590) includes both nutrient recommendations for “Grass Establishment” as well as those for “Established Grasses”. Employees should assure themselves that they are using the proper charts for fertility recommendations regardless of the situation. A thorough review of the 590 standard by NRCS employees is strongly recommended.

OSU Extension has two different soil fertility recommendations for grass “establishment”. One is the “OSU Soil Test Interpretations Fact Sheet 2225, (Table 3)”. The other is the “Oklahoma NRCS Cost-Share Lime and Fertilizer Recommendations” (September 2002) which was mutually developed by OSU and NRCS to be used for grass establishment recommendations in USDA Farm Programs. The Oklahoma NRCS Cost-Share Lime and Fertilizer Recommendations guidance is reflected in the Nutrient Management Standard (590) for “Grass Establishments”. OSU Extension personnel have been provided instructions on how to deal with the NRCS grass establishment guidance. NRCS field offices are strongly urged to communicate with OSU Extension personnel to work out ways to both recognize and deal with soil testing for grass establishment purposes. **Soils tests for grass establishment need to be identified as such and the fertility recommendations provided by OSU in these situations should be reviewed by NRCS to avoid conflicts with the Nutrient Management Standard (590) guidance**. Field offices should work with those farm program clients who will be doing grass establishments, and encourage them to bring the soil test analysis to NRCS for a review of fertility recommendations **prior** to applying nutrients for grass establishments.

Note: As a reminder, if a soil test laboratory other than OSU is used, the lab must use the same phosphorus and potassium extractant (Mehlich-3) to provide similar soil testing results.

If you have any questions concerning the above issues, please contact Randy Freeland, State Resource Conservationist, at 405-742-1240, or Larry Poindexter, Nutrient Management Specialist, at 405-742-1221.

/s/

M. DARREL DOMINICK
State Conservationist